

A Child Is Waiting for You

Cabinet Secretary Josette D. Manning

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There's a Child Waiting for You – Opinion Editorial

Delaware Celebrates National Adoption Month and Appeals for Adoptive Families

“I want to be adopted because I want to be able to have a place to call home and a family to be my family.” AH – a seventeen-year-old in foster care. “It’s a lot better to have someone to count on, be there for you, listen to you, and support you forever!” Lindsey – a sixteen-year-old in foster care.

These are just two of the voices of the 650 youth in foster care in Delaware. While most of our children in foster care will be reunited with their families, 82 youth are currently awaiting an adoptive family.

November is National Adoption Month and this year’s focus is on the importance of family to older youth in foster care. “Compared to their general population peers, youth exiting foster care are more likely to drop out of school, become parents before they are ready, experience homelessness or end up in jail.” For every youth who becomes an adult while in foster care, communities pay an average of \$300,000 in social costs over that person’s lifetime. Finding adoptive families for our youth in care is our shared responsibility as Delawareans and this is your call to action. We currently have 38 teens awaiting adoption who will be thrust into adulthood without a safety net if they do not find their forever family before their 18th birthday.

I know you're probably thinking of all of the reasons why you cannot adopt a child. Or maybe you're thinking that surely someone better suited will step-up. I challenge you to reach out to our Adoption Program Manager, Moira Dillon, and learn the real facts about adoption. For instance, your marital status, wealth and education are not critical requirements for adoption. We only require your willingness and ability to provide a permanent and loving home. You may also be worried that a child in foster care has "issues" or has done something wrong and you are worried about how that would impact you and your family. Know that our children are in care because of unfortunate circumstances beyond their control – something someone did to them, not anything they did. It is true that some of our children have special needs and all have experienced the trauma of being separated from their biological families; however, as an adoptive parent, you will receive support, training and resources, including a community of adoptive parents, to help you throughout your family's journey.

Research has proven that more than anything else in their lives, children need safe, stable and nurturing families. You can give the gift of family to a child and not only forever change their life, but also help change the world, one child at a time. As you sit down to Thanksgiving dinner and give thanks for your family this year, spare a second to think of the many Delaware youth who have yet to find their forever family and ask yourself if there is an extra place at your table.

For more information on adopting from foster care, please contact our Adoption Program Manager, Moira Dillon, at (302) 633-2658 or visit kids.delaware.gov.

Josette Manning is the Cabinet Secretary for the Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

The Children's Department provides services to children who have been abused, neglected, are dependent, have mental health or substance problems, have been adjudicated delinquent by the Courts, as well as prevention services targeted toward all youth. For more information, please visit <https://kids.delaware.gov>

[The Annie E. Casey Foundation: Aging Out of Foster Care in America](#)

[Annie E. Casey, Aging out of Foster Care in America; Handout-2013](#)